Theophilus Yale (1675–1760)

Origin and Family

Born Nov 13, 1675. Died Sept 13, 1760, age 84.

Father: Capt. Thomas Yale (1648–1736)
Mother: Rebecca Gibbards (1650–1716)
Spouse: Sarah Street (c. 1681–1784)

Children[1]

1. Elihu Yale (1703–1745)
2. Ann Yale (1705–)
3. Samuel Yale (1711–)
4. Theophilus Yale (1714–)
5. Sarah Yale (1716–1784)
6. Catherine Yale (1721–)
7. Mary Yale (1726–)

Rodney Horace Yale[1] and other sources state that Sarah Street was born in 1690 and died in 1784 at age 94; however, this is incorrect. A 1690 birth would mean she married at 11 and had her first child at 13. Furthermore, the 1784 death record often cited likely refers to her daughter, Sarah Yale Atwater, who died that year.

Official Wallingford town records in *The Street Genealogy*[2] confirm that Sarah Street was born on January 15, 1681. This makes her 20 years old at her marriage and 22 when her first child, Elihu, was born. She was therefore 103 years old at her death in 1784—an extraordinary but well-documented lifespan.

Sarah was raised in the Rev. Samuel Street House on South Main Street in Wallingford, built by her father in 1673. It is the oldest standing home in America to have housed a Yale ancestor, and is now over 350 years old.

Theophilus' grandfather was the immigrant Thomas Yale, and Thomas probably offered many stories about Wales and the crossing to America. And he would have known of the exploits of his father's cousin Elihu Yale, including his travels to India and his 1718 endowment to the Yale College in New Haven, only 14 miles from his home.

From Rodney Horace Yale[1]: "Capt. Theophilus Yale, Esq., of Wallingford, Conn., was married to Sarah, daughter of Rev. Samuel and Anna Street of the same town."

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An early Wallingford Photo – year unknown but probably late nineteenth century

Occupation

"He was a magistrate from about 1724 to the date of this death. He also filled many other offices, both civil and military, all of which he appears to have discharged with great credit to himself and the public. He was emphatically a servant of the people."[1]

In 1719, Theophilus was captain of the West Company militia in Wallingford - a Train Band - which earned him the title of Captain Theophilus Yale. He also served as Deputy from Wallingford (similar to a modern Assemblyman) in 1724 through 1739.[3] His main vocation was Justice of the Peace (Magistrate) for the County of New Haven beginning in 1726 until at least 1747.[4]

As an example of his duties as Deputy of Wallingford, Theophilus represented his town in a land dispute with the neighboring Middletown:

> "At the October session, 1726, Middletown appeared before the [Connecticut] court and asserted that Wallingford by "false misrepresentations had obtained a disannulling of their west line to Middletown's great loss" and praying for relief.
>
> Accordingly, the sheriff was sent to Wallingford to summon the inhabitants before the assembly: Theophilus Yale acting for the town entered appearance and presented a counter petition signed by four Wallingford men who had made purchases in the so-called Country or Purchase Lands, and the matter was apparently dropped for the time being."[5]

A Century of Meriden contains a deposition given by Theophilus.[5] This deposition, taken over 250 years ago, is a firsthand account regarding a farm boundary dispute:

"The boundaries of Deputy Governor Jones' large farm have already been described. Naturally he did not live in Meriden but, nevertheless, he must have made frequent visits of inspection to ascertain the condition of his farm and to see that it was properly cared for. In charge of it he placed Captain Thomas Yale of Wallingford. Just a glimpse of the relations of the two men is given in a deposition made in 1757 by Theophilus Yale, the son of Capt. Thomas."[5]

> *"About ye year 1740 I went with Mr. Hitchcock ye County Surveyor and Deacon Robert Roys upon ye Desire of Dan11 Baldwin to Wallingford North West corner bounds and we run from thence eastward along by ye line of Marked Trees which my Honored Father Thomas Yale informed me was Wallingford North Line until we came to Pilgrims Harbour bridge which my said father informed me was ye place where people Constantly passed over, and then we came to ye Southwest corner of Mr. Jones's Farm which farm was Laid out in ye Country Land (So Called) and then we continued ye same course as far Eastward as ye South East corner of Mr. Streets farm now Daniel Baldwins * * * I*

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> *remember when I was young Mr Jones Desired my father to take care of his said farm and renew ye bounds, and when my father was old Mr Jones Desired him to take me with him and Shew me ye bounds of ye farm, and I remember I often went with my father to renew ye bounds of said Jones's farm. I see all ye bounds thereof and well remember ye south bounds of said farm joined on Wallingford north line," etc., etc."*

Theophilus was 82 years old at the time.[1]

Religious Enforcement as Justice of the Peace

While Connecticut functioned as a colony, it was far from secular. As Justice of the Peace, Theophilus was responsible for prosecuting those who strayed from established Puritan teachings. He worked to ensure "rogue" preachers did not introduce doctrines—specifically "New Light" Calvinism—that conflicted with the "Standing Order." This led to a conflict with Rev. Philemon Robbins of Branford.[6] In 1741, Robbins preached to a Baptist congregation in Wallingford without the local pastor's consent.

> "They had now expelled from the association all the zealous Calvinistic preachers, or enthusiasts, as they esteemed them, except Mr. Robbins, of Branford, a young gentleman who had been ordained about eight or ten years. They had been disciplining and persecuting [him] for some time. In December, 1741, Mr. Merriman, in behalf of himself and people, wrote a letter to Mr. Robbins, desiring him to come and give them a sermon or two. Mr. Robbins accepted the invitation, and appointed the time when he would be with them. After this, Mr. Robbins was presented with a paper, signed by forty-two persons, of Mr. Whittelsey's congregation, desiring that he would not preach to the baptists in Wallingford. Mr. Robbins could see no reason why he should not preach to the baptists. It appeared to him rather unkind, and contrary to a Christian spirit, to prevent their preaching, when they thirsted for the word of life, and there was a more than common prospect of doing good. He had given his word, and appointed the day, and though he had some hesitation with respect to it at first, after he had received the letter from Wallingford, he determined to go and preach according to his engagement."[6]

In response, Theophilus filed this complaint against Rev. Robbins on February 4th, 1742:

> *"I, the subscriber, do signify, by way of complaint to this reverend consociation, that on the 6th day of January last past, the Rev. Philemon Robbins did enter into the first society in Wallingford, and preach in a disorderly manner, in contempt of the authority of this consociation, without the consent of the Rev. Mr. Whittelsey, pastor of said society, contrary to the act of the Guilford council, contrary to the act of this consociation, and contrary to the desire of two neighboring ministers, and a great number of church members in Wallingford."*[6]

Rev. Robbins encountered many difficulties as a result of this complaint and "additional complaints of questionable merit were filed against him for many years."[6]

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End of Life

Capt. Theophilus died in Wallingford September 13, 1760, aged 84 years.[7] His widow, Sarah Street Yale, died some 24 years later at the house of her son-in-law, Joseph Hough, in Wallingford, on the 28th day of November, 1784-85.[1]

Research Notes

Online Genealogy References:
WikiTree ID: Yale-10
FamilySearch ID: 278K-RDX
Wikipedia: Theophilus Yale
Find a Grave Memorial: 195245070

Further Reading:

- Yale, Max Brian. *Guide to the Max Brian Yale Genealogical Collection*. *Max Brian Yale Genealogical Collection.* 2025
- Yale, Max Brian. *Yale Family Coat of Arms* - Origin and History. *Max Brian Yale Genealogical Collection*, 2025

References

1. Yale, Rodney Horace. *Yale Genealogy and History of Wales*. Beatrice, NE: Milburn & Scott, 1908. Ref no. 43 p. 126

2. Street, Henry A., and Mary A. Street. The Street Genealogy. Exeter, NH: News-Letter Press, 1895

3. Connecticut Society of the Colonial Dames of America. Register of the Connecticut Society of the Colonial Dames of America, 1893–1907. New Haven, CT, 1907. p. 318.

4. Hoadly, Charles J. (Ed.). The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut (1726–1735). Vol. 7. Hartford, CT: Case, Lockwood & Brainard, 1873 (1636-1776)

5. Gillespie, C. Bancroft. A Century of Meriden: Historical Reference and Pictorial Description of the Town of Meriden, Connecticut. Meriden, CT: Journal Publishing Co., 1906.C. Bancroft Gillespie., 1906

6. Davis, Charles Henry Stanley. History of Wallingford, Conn, from its Settlement in 1670 to the Present Time. Meriden, CT: Published by the Author, 1870. (Note: Quote corrected to Theophilus Yale per Errata, p. 954).

7. Find a Grave "Capt Theophilus Yale (1675–1760)". Memorial 195245070.

8. Historic Buildings of Connecticut. Rev. Samuel Street House (1673). Wallingford, CT.

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